

Annex 5: Risks and mitigations

1. Financial Risk:

The proposed measures may not fully resolve the funding gap if demand exceeds forecasts, operator costs rise, or projected savings in other projects do not occur, potentially increasing the 2025/26 deficit.

Mitigation: If this happens, further underspends identified may be used, alternatively all the committed BSIP bus service funding for 2026/27 may be used to cover the shortfall, with BSOG and/or the new BSIP Bus Grant allocation from 2026/27 supporting services to be used instead.

2. Future Funding Uncertainty:

BSIP funding from the Department for Transport beyond March 2026 is unconfirmed. Reduced or withdrawn funding may require changes to the scheme or risk its viability.

Mitigation: The scheme will be reviewed at year-end to assess effectiveness and guide decisions based on BSIP funding updates.

3. Impact on Bus Patronage:

Higher weekly ticket prices may reduce regular passenger numbers, hindering efforts to promote public transport and meet carbon reduction goals.

Mitigation: Ticket sales and feedback will be monitored, with possible adjustments considered during the year-end review.

4. Reputational Risk:

Changes to discounted ticket schemes for young and low-income groups may attract public or media criticism, especially if not well explained or overlapping with other initiatives like congestion charges.

Mitigation: We will implement a clear communications plan to explain the changes, manage expectations, and reaffirm the Council's commitment to supporting public transport.

5. Opportunity Cost:

Shifting funds from other bus projects could delay their benefits and affect broader transport goals.

Mitigation: These projects will be prioritised for future funding to minimise long-term impact.

6. Implementation and Communication Risks:

If changes are not carried out smoothly or communicated clearly, there could be disruptions in operations, stakeholder dissatisfaction, or a decline in confidence in the council's transport strategies.

Mitigation: Ongoing engagement with bus operators, passenger groups, and the Department for Transport will help to keep people informed and onside.

7. **Impact on Vulnerable Groups:**

Higher prices may be unaffordable for some, especially low-income passengers, potentially limiting their access to essential services.

Mitigation: Not all affected passengers will pay an extra £5 or £2.50 weekly; alternatives may be cheaper. Communications about the price increase will include information on other bus ticketing options.